[Sri A. J. John]

58. With a view to accelerating the educational progress of the backward classes, a new system of giving financial aid to students for the purchase of school requisites has been introduced. Accordingly students of the Middle School classes are given Rs. 25 each and those in the High School classes Rs. 40 each. Nearly 8,000 students were benefited by this scheme which has cost the Government over Rs. 3 lakhs. College students are either provided with free boarding and lodging or are given stipends at the rate of Rs. 45 per month besides the cost of books and other accessories.

59. The House Construction Scheme for the Backward classes which was started during the preceding year is progressing steadily. A total number of 285 houses costing Rs. 71,250 has been already constructed and families have settled in all of them. The construction of 435 houses has since been sanctioned and the work is in progress.

60. The provision made for the next year includes a sum of Rs. 3 lakhs for working out a ten year plan for the advancement of Backward Communities, Rs. 30,000 for welfare work among the Hill Tribes and Rs. 5·75 lakhs for other ameliorative measures.

Department of Co-operation

61. *Coir-Industry.*—The bulk of the coastal population of the State is dependent for their livelihood mainly on the coir industry. But this industry has never been able to provide full-time employment to those who are engaged in it. Government have sponsored a Coir Scheme to organise the industry on a co-operative basis. A Coir Special Officer with adequate executive and ministerial staff has been appointed. Government have ear-marked a sum of Rs. 1 lakh for working the scheme during this financial year. Twenty such co-operative societies have already started work and their progress is watched with keen interest. Steps are being taken for starting a Central Coir Marketing Society with Alleppey as head-quarters. Government wish to help these societies with an initial grant of Rs. 2,000 each in the first year and Rs. 1,000 in the second year to put them on their feet. A provision of Rs. 10 lakhs has been made for this purpose and a further sum of Rs. 50,000 for organisational expenses.

62. *Co-operative Milk Supply.*—To provide pure, unadulterated milk to the urban population of the State, a milk supply scheme has been launched and it is under way. There is a Milk Supply Centre at Trivandrum with five primary feeder societies. The centre supplies milk to 600 consumers in the City, the quantity of milk distributed daily being now more than 1,500 pounds.

63. *Housing.*—Government have embarked on a scheme of house construction spread over a period of years, in order to provide houses for industrial and agricultural labourers, fisher-folk, municipal menials and other homeless people. Considerable progress has been achieved and the scheme is pursued with enthusiasm and determination. A Housing Board has been constituted to deal with the problem in a systematic manner. The number of houses constructed till now is 181 and they are located in selected centres in different parts of the State.

Village Unions and Panchayats

64. The Village Unions and Panchayats have an important role in the realisation of "Grama-Swaraj." In this State there are at present 198 Village Unions, 107 Panchayats, 91 Village Uplift Centres and 64 Rural Reconstruction Centres. All these institutions have now been brought into the fold of a single department, *viz.*, the Panchayat Department. With a view to reconsituting the Village Unions and Panchayats a new Panchayat Act has been enacted. For the next financial year, an aggregate provision of Rs. 45·66 lakhs is included out of

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which a sum of Rs. 37·25 lakhs is exclusively earmarked for works and contributions to the Village Panchayat and Unions. As a corollary to the enactment of the Village Panchayat Act, a general Panchayat election will have to be held next year and a provision amounting to Rs. 3 lakhs is made in the Budget for the printing and supply of Panchayat Electoral rolls.

Capital Expenditure

65. The budget for the coming year provides for a capital expenditure of Rs. 664·27 lakhs. Among the important items included in our capital programme I would mention Rs. 267·16 lakhs on Electricity Schemes, Rs. 76·76 lakhs for the construction of Irrigation, Navigation, Embankment and Drainage Works and Rs. 23·22 lakhs for industrial development. It is noteworthy that the whole of this expenditure is proposed to be met from current revenues and receipts from debt heads. There is no proposal to raise any public loans or to resort to open market operations to finance capital undertakings. The capital programme mentioned above does not include other works of a capital nature involving large expenditure like the Perunchani Dam, the Vadakkancheri River Valley Scheme, the Neyyar Project and the Vembanad Tidal Bund and Spillway Schemes which are treated as Grow More Food Schemes and are financed entirely from current revenues and from accumulated funds.

Electricity Department

66. The Electricity Department has made considerable progress during the year. It is the policy of the Government that before long our villages must be provided with electric lights and power supply to an extent sufficient to ensure the development of all the cottage and other industries. We have already extended power supply for de-watering and lift irrigation to various centres, to aid the food-production drive.

67. The capital programme under Electricity for the next year provides for an expenditure of Rs. 267·16 lakhs.

68. The Sengulam Project is expected to be put into commission before the end of this year and the construction of the Madupatty Dam also is progressing satisfactorily. The execution of the multi-purpose scheme at Peringalkuthu will be accelerated during the next year. With the completion of these new schemes, our programme to supply adequate power to all the industrial concerns in the State and also to extend power supply to villages all over the State could be fully implemented. From the financial point of view, the electrical schemes are expected to yield a net revenue of about half a crore of rupees in the course of two years.

Transport Department

69. An expenditure of about Rs. 18 lakhs is provided under capital for the Transport Department next year in addition to about Rs. 8 lakhs from the depreciation fund. The departmental workshop is nearing completion and with this additional facility, it will be possible to maintain our rolling stock properly in future.

70. The most important change made in the working of this Department is the transfer to this Department of the responsibility for maintaining nationalised routes, for which a provision of Rs. 10 lakhs has been made in the budget. I hope the hon'ble Members would recognise that this is a legitimate charge on the Transport Department on account of the savings under wear and tear of tyres and rolling stock, which that Department will be able to secure by the outlay on roads. This Department has made all-round progress and the re-organisation of the staff is now engaging the attention of Government.

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